



By Brent Drinkut/Journal &amp; Courier

Fabian Winkler, assistant professor of visual and performing arts at Purdue, works on an ongoing project, "Waves," recently inside the Forest Products building. Winkler received an honorary mention in the Interactive Art category at Ars Electronica 2009 with another project, called "Line of Sight."

## Professor brings technology, art together for unique program

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Lake Michigan, flashlights, dancers and vinyl records all play a role in the art of Fabian Winkler.

The Purdue University assistant professor of visual and performing arts is staking new territory on campus by bridging gaps between technology and art in the Electronic and Time-Based Art program.

"It is a very unique area," said Winkler, who is the program's director. "It is not focused only on one technology or medium to create art — or on one conceptual framework of art. It tries to do it in all the possible forms of creative expression, using electronic media really in the broadest sense of the word. From technologies that may be considered old, like a phonograph record player, all the way up to handheld devices."

The program, which started in 2006, offers an undergraduate minor and a three-year master of fine arts graduate program in the area of cross-disciplinary electronic arts and media. The goal is to create collaborations across the different divisions of the visual and performing arts — and other schools and colleges at Purdue.

Without boundaries, Winkler said, innovative ideas can be uncovered.

That format, especially the inclusion of time-based and interactive art, makes the program different than the studio-based arts traditionally taught at Purdue.

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**Fabian Winkler,  
Purdue assistant professor**

Unlike a sculpture or drawing that is displayed in its finished form, time-based art is meant to be viewed as it changes through a specific process.

It is a medium that Winkler has used for his own art.

In September, Winkler's "Line of Sight," a light installation made up of 100 computer-controlled flashlights, was part of the Ars Electronica festival in Austria.

The collaborative work with Daniel Sauter, a University of Illinois-Chicago art professor, projected a low resolution video image of Purdue dance professor Rebecca Bryant. Each flashlight, organized in a 10-by-10 matrix, projected one pixel of an image.

Bryant's dancing was processed through a security program that identifies "suspicious movements" in crowds.

The question the piece was asking, Winkler said, was, "What kind of movements are picked up by a system that lead to further conse-

quence or further persecution?"

The Ars jury wrote that the piece "is a poetic rendering with a sinister origin," and "the work's intended social critique is outshined by its highly accomplished formal execution."

At Purdue, Winkler said, these concepts — basically social questions — can be expanded by collaborations with other academics who may not consider the artistic possibilities in their own research, such as at the Birck Nanotechnology Center or College of Agriculture.

Winkler understands some would question this type of art, especially during a time when universities are facing economic cutbacks.

The benefit "is to reveal ideas that are not otherwise addressed — for example, ideas that are more of a critical nature. To turn the question around, why do we put all of this money into research when we know, for example, it could have a health risk?"

The end result could also, Winkler said, become a patented technology or product.

In addition to teaching, Winkler continues to work on various artistic projects.

He and Shannon McMullen, an assistant professor of visual and performing arts and his wife, are working on "Waves." The piece involves using specially designed buoys in Lake Michigan that measure the movement of waves. The wave sounds will be recorded and pressed as grooves on a vinyl record for playback.